



## Dealing in Hate: The development of anti-German propaganda

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### Dealing in Hate

#### The Development of Anti-German Propaganda

*Dr. Michael F. Connors*

#### The Germanophobic fallacy

It is widely conceded today that the kind of thinking which presents any ethnic or national group in terms of a crude, unflattering caricature is undesirable and sloppy at the very least. Conversely, acceptance of others on the basis of individual merit, without reference to racial or national background is regarded as one of the distinguishing marks of the truly educated man.

One of the most widely publicized reason, offered in explanation of our opposition to the regime of the late Adolf Hitler was its severe policy directed at Jews and other enemies of the regime. By some curious irony, however, many of the same Americans who were so quick to attack the Nazi racial doctrines have been the worst offenders in spreading abroad a fantastic myth of singular German wickedness. As a consequence of this Germanophobic myth, the very word German conjures up in all too many minds an uncomfortable, if vague, image of robot-like, goose-stepping legions of glassy-eyed storm troopers set in motion by the harshly barked commands of an Erich von Stroheim type "Prussian" officer. Furthermore, "militarism," "aggressiveness," and a marked preference for "authoritarian" over democracy have well-nigh universally been regarded as "typically German" national traits.

Germanophobia in the thirties and forties had for the "educated" classes in the West an appeal which could never have been held for such concepts as "white supremacy" or anti-Semitism. It is precisely this academic and intellectual respectability of the notion of unique German wickedness, on the basis of specious racial and historical arguments, that has made of it such a dangerous fallacy.

#### Nineteenth century German prestige

This dark image of a sinister, aggressive, predatory, and militarily regimented Germany only became prevalent in the present century. The English historian, Frederic William Maitland, has described the once characteristic attitude toward the Germans:

... it was usual and plausible to paint the German as an unpractical, dreamy, sentimental being, looking out with mild blue eyes into a cloud of music and metaphysics and tobacco smoke. <sup>1</sup>

The French writer, Madame de Stael, romantically portrayed for the Napoleonic world of the early nineteenth century a Germany utterly unlike the grotesque image later drawn by the Allied propagandists of two World Wars. Madame de Stael's Germans were a nation of "Poets and Thinkers," a race of kindly, impractical, other-worldly dreamers without national prejudices and, strangely, in the light of later propaganda, "disinclined to war." [2](#)

In America too, a similarly warm view of things German predominated. It is difficult to exaggerate the constructive impact of German institutions upon American life and the cordiality of the reception accorded them in the century or so from Frederick the Great to Bismarck. The story of this golden age of German-American relations has been magnificently chronicled by a very thorough and gifted American scholar, Henry M. Adams, in his recently published *Prussian-American Relations, 1775-1871*. [3](#) In the cultural and intellectual spheres as in the political sphere the relationship was one of immense mutual profit.

The Prussian system of higher education and the cultural flowering which characterized Prussia in the era of regeneration following the Napoleonic wars all left a distinct mark upon America. The list of American scholars and writers -- George Tichnor, Edward Everett, Joseph Cogswell, George Bancroft, John Lothrop Motley, Henry E. Dwight, Washington Irving, Henry W. Longfellow, and James F. Cooper, to mention only some -- who went to Prussia to secure inspiration for their life's work is a most impressive one. Thus, to Americans too, "whether seen in their newly united nation or in this country, the Germans were generally regarded as methodical and energetic people" indeed as "models of progress," while "in their devotion to music, education, science, and technology they aroused the admiration and emulation of Americans." [4](#)

It is evident then that Germans in the nineteenth century ranked quite high in the esteem of their European and American neighbors. Two unrelated historic factors seemed to conspire at the time to give widespread currency to views of this sort.

First, there were the truly monumental achievements of Germans in every sphere of cultural, intellectual, and scientific creativity. It could hardly have seemed amiss to speak of a nation of *Dichter und Denker* when one thought of the contributions to literature of Goethe and Schiller, the historical works of Ranke and Niebuhr, the philosophical studies of Kant and Hegel, the great scientific achievements of Alexander von Humboldt and Röntgen, and the varied musical achievements of Beethoven, the Strausses, and Wagner.

The second factor which seemed to support this attitude toward the Germans was their military and political weakness before their achievement of national unification in 1871.

One cannot imagine a more vivid contrast than that between de Stael's Germans and the stereotyped image of monocled, burr-headed, heel-clicking, mindless robots which Hollywood did so much to popularize in the thirties and forties.

Possibly even more difficult to grasp, for those whose thinking has been shaped by the propaganda of recent years, is the fact that throughout the nineteenth century France rather than Germany was cast in the role of international bully and villain. [5](#) Had not Louis XIV and Bonaparte repeatedly made a battleground of Europe? Could anyone forget that French arms had rolled at high tide across the entire continent of Europe, threatening to engulf even the vast empire of the Russian Tsars? Or could anyone forget that it had required the combined resources of Austria, Britain, Russia, and Prussia, assisted by the fortuitous intervention of nature in the form of the Russian winter, to shatter the might of the Corsican conqueror?

## Historic German 'militarism'

A writer inclined to present France in an unfavorable light relative to Germany would find, in the story of the French invasions of Germany since 1300, a veritable propaganda arsenal. Though there were at least seventeen major French invasions of German territory in the period between 1300 and 1600, the period of French intervention that is genuinely appalling is that from 1635 to 1815. The French, after Richelieu earlier had kept the Thirty Years' War going through diplomacy, ravished Germany continuously from 1635 to 1648. They also invaded German territory seven times during the concluding phase of their war with Spain which ended in 1659. A few years later during the War of Devolution and again during their encounter with the Dutch in 1672, the French violated German territory on at least four occasions. Then, between 1678 and 1686, the French, through their reunion policy, committed at least ten major acts of aggression against Germany. The War of the League of Augsburg in 1688 actually began as a French "preventive war" against the German states with the unprovoked devastation of the Palatinate, as well as the destruction of Heidelberg, Worms, and Speyer. Further French invasions of Germany followed in 1702, 1733, and 1740. Again during the Seven Years War (1756-63) French aggression against German territory was repeated. Finally, during the periods of the French Revolution and Napoleon, Germany was repeatedly bled white by French invasions and coalition wars. One might reasonably conclude then that an estimate of thirty French invasions of German territory since the Middle Ages is a conservative understatement.

An examination of the available statistical evidence on the comparative warlikeness and addiction to militarism of the European powers since the end of the Middle Ages reveals some astonishing facts. Assuming the validity of the propagandist thesis of unique German aggressiveness, one might reasonably expect that a study of the relevant data concerning army size, casualties, number and magnitude of battles engaged in, military expenditures and so on, would reflect this alleged German iniquitousness. Yet such is very decidedly not the case.

It has been estimated by a careful scholar that there were "about twenty-six hundred important battles involving European states" in the 460 years between 1480 and 1940. Of these, France participated in forty-seven percent, "Germany (Prussia)" in twenty-five percent, and England and Russia in twenty-two percent each. <sup>6</sup> The Prussian record can hardly be described as uniquely warlike on the basis of such evidence! It might also be added that geographic factors, like Britain's insular position and Russia's remoteness from the mainstream of European history during the period, doubtless helped considerably to reduce their percentage of involvement.

Professor Quincy Wright offers this further statistical evidence for the same period, that is, 1480-1940:

Of the 278 wars involving European states during this period, the percentage of participation by the principal states was: England, 28; France, 26; Spain, 23; Russia, 22; Austria, 19; Turkey, 15; Poland, 11; Sweden, 9; Netherlands, 8; Germany (Prussia), 8; Italy (Savoy-Sardinia), 9; and Denmark, 7. <sup>7</sup>

In the circumstances, one is compelled to assent to Dr. Wright's conclusion that "attribution of a persistently warlike character to certain states ... seems not to have been based upon a comparison of any objective criteria of warlikeness." <sup>8</sup>

The distinguished sociologist and historian, Pitirim A. Sorokin, in his monumental study, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, <sup>9</sup> assembled data proving that historically, of all the nations of Europe, Germany had the lowest percentage of years with war. Spain, Poland, Lithuania, Greece, England, France, Russia, Holland, Austria, and Italy all exceeded Germany in this respect. Sorokin's conclusions are very much like those of Quincy Wright above. He writes that "the magnitude of 'militarism' or 'war effort' or 'war burden' shifts from country to country in the course of time. Furthermore ... there are no consistently peaceful and consistently militant countries." <sup>10</sup>

The eminent British military and naval historian, Captain Russell Grenfell, computed the record of numerical involvement in wars by the major European powers in the crucial century between Waterloo and Sarajevo as follows" <sup>11</sup>

<b>Military involvement</b>	
<b>Country</b>	<b>Wars</b>
Britain	10
Russia	7
France	5
Austria	3
Prussia- Germany	3

In the face of such evidence, it seems incredible that any really thoughtful person could still adhere to the old popular superstition concerning German "aggressiveness" and "militarism."

## **Public opinion of Germany to 1914**

All these facts were very clearly reflected in world opinion at the time of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. In the words of Professor Sidney Fay, "Bismark's unification of Germany was hailed at the time as a desirable, even glorious accomplishment of the spirit of nationalism." <sup>12</sup> Writing in a similar vein, another distinguished American student of this period relates that:

Whatever opinion historians may now hold on the question of responsibility for the war, there was little difference of opinion on this point among contemporary neutrals ... When the war broke out, Englishmen were almost unanimous in believing that the conflict had been wantonly precipitated by the French Emperor, and that the fundamental cause for the war was the French desire to reestablish French hegemony on the continent by the defeat of Prussia and the acquisition of German territory. <sup>13</sup>

The English writers, Thomas Carlyle and Edward Freeman, were especially ardent in their enthusiasm for the cause of Prussia during the war of 1870. Carlyle, in a public letter to the Times in 1870, advanced arguments of an "historical, racial, and political" nature on behalf of the alleged

necessity of a German victory over France. He concluded the letter on the warm note that Germany would become the "queen of the continent," something that appeared to him as "the most hopeful public fact that has occurred during my life." <sup>14</sup> The glowing devotion to the cause of Germany of the famous "Oxford School" historian, Edward A. Freeman, was revealed in an open letter to the Pall Mall Gazette in November of 1870, when he asserted it was the "high mission" of Germany to bring an end to the French "conspiracy" against world peace. <sup>15</sup>

American public opinion too was thoroughly cordial to Germany at the time. The American reaction to the Franco-Prussian War has been described by George H. Blakeslee, in his introduction to a very important study, as follows:

During the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, American sentiment was so strongly against the French that many an anti-French editorial of 1870 could easily pass for an anti-German editorial of 1914, if the name Napoleon the Third were changed to William the Second ... In 1870, to the majority of Americans, Germany was the land of universities and of religious freedom, fighting for national unity against an Imperial aggressor. Germany had been one of the few friends of the North during the Civil War; while Germans had formed a notably large proportion of the northern armies and had won for themselves in the nation a position of high regard. The German victories were regarded in the United States with as much enthusiasm in 1870 as they were with regret in 1914. <sup>16</sup>

John Gerow Gazley arrived at a strikingly similar conclusion in the most exhaustive analysis ever attempted of American opinion of Germany during the period. He found that the American response from the outset of the war was "overwhelmingly pro-German and anti-French" while "in striking contrast to the belief that France represented despotism, decadence and reaction was the common conviction among Americans that Germany's success meant the triumph of progress, liberty and civilization." <sup>17</sup>

In nineteenth-century Britain, France had long been regarded as the "hereditary enemy," while the French reciprocated with bitter contempt for Perfide Albion. So long as Britain and France remained the two major factors in the European power equation there was but little likelihood of a change in this alignment. Although the French were pathologically obsessed with a desire for revanche upon Germany after their inglorious defeat of 1871, they continued to be at odds with England too, down to the early years of the present century. These Anglo-French tensions brought the world to the brink of war in 1898, at the time of the Fashoda Crisis over the control of the Egyptian Sudan. Only after the Entente Cordiale of 1904 did Anglo-French rapprochement become a reality. With this shift in the European power alignment Britain and Germany became increasingly estranged.

Nonetheless, if we return to the period before this mutation in the power balance, we cannot be other than profoundly impressed by the fact that British scholars and publicists in general had been most favorably disposed toward everything in German, history, culture, and institutions throughout the nineteenth century. The eminent Cambridge historian, Herbert Butterfield, has the following comments to offer concerning this British adulation of Germany:

In England the view once prevailed that German history was particularly the history of freedom, for it was a story that comprised federation, parliament, autonomous cities, Protestantism, and a law of liberty carried by German colonies to the Slavonic east. In those days it was the Latin States which were considered to be congenial to authoritarianism, clinging to the Papacy in Italy, the Inquisition in Spain and the Bonapartist dictatorships in militaristic France. The reversal of this view in the twentieth century, and its replacement by a common opinion that Germany had been the aggressor and enemy of freedom throughout all the ages, will no doubt be the subject of historical research itself someday, especially as it seems to have coincided so closely with a change in British foreign policy ... Up to the early 1900's when historical scholarship in England came to its peak in men like Acton and Maitland, words can hardly describe the admiration for Germany -- and the confessed discipleship -- which existed amongst English historians. <sup>18</sup>

A careful German scholar has given us a fascinating and detailed study of British historiography on the subject of Germany from the early nineteenth century through the second World War. <sup>19</sup> It thoroughly confirms the thesis elaborated by Professor Butterfield above. The extreme Germanophile sentiments of men like Thomas Arnold, Edward Freeman, William Stubbs, and Thomas Carlyle certainly presented a marked contrast to the bitter denunciations of everything German by British (and American) historians during the thirties and forties of this century. Arnold, for example, looked upon Germany not as a nation with a unique predisposition toward authoritarianism and regimentation, but rather as a "cradle of law, virtue, and freedom," and considered it a "distinction of the first rank" that the English belonged to the Germanic family of peoples. <sup>20</sup> We have seen something of the Germanophile inclinations of Thomas Carlyle and Edward A. Freeman at the time of the Franco-Prussian War.

Despite a widening rift between Germany and Britain after the Anglo-French agreement of 1904, there was nothing even approaching the wild hostility of the years after 1914. In America there was considerable warm feeling for Germany on the part of scholars and men in public life right up to the

eve of Sarajevo. Perhaps the most highly regarded history of Germany in the English language was Ernest F. Henderson's *A Short History of Germany*, [21](#) which was published in several editions and is still read with respect today. A thoroughly cordial treatment of German history in general and of Prussian history in particular, it was dedicated "by gracious permission" to Prince Henry of Prussia.

In 1905 Andrew Dickson White, a noted American historian, educator and United States Ambassador to Germany, could write that:

Germany, from a great confused mass of warriors and thinkers and workers, militant at cross-purposes, wearing themselves out in vain struggles, and preyed upon by malevolent neighbors, has become a great power in arms, in art, in science, in literature; a fortress of high thought; a guardian of civilization; the natural ally of every nation which seeks the better development of humanity. [22](#)

As late as June 8, 1913, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of William II's accession to the throne of the Reich, distinguished Americans, including William Howard Taft, Theodore Roosevelt, and Nicholas Murray Butler, in a special commemoration of the occasion by *The New York Times*, heaped lavish praise upon the German Emperor; Taft even cited him as the world's greatest single force for peace at the time. [23](#) Butler's comments were positively rhapsodic. He concluded on the glowing note that "if the German Emperor had not been born to monarchy, he would have been chosen monarch -- or chief executive -- by popular vote of any modern people among whom his lot might have been cast." [24](#) Yet in a year or so William was to be called "the beast of Berlin!" This was achieved via the collaboration of "learned historians" and "gutter journalists." The outcome of their joint efforts was "the first great triumph of the art of modern war propaganda." [25](#)

Thus it is evident that Imperial Germany began its national political life in 1871 with an enormous reservoir of international good will. As might be expected in an age of rapidly quickening imperial rivalries, the new Reich became embroiled on occasion with other nations. There were differences with America in the Caribbean area and in the Pacific over Samoa. There were differences with Imperial Russia too, particularly in the Balkans, where the interests of the multinational Austrian Habsburg Empire, Germany's ally since 1879, clashed with the Pan-Slav policy of the Tsars. Indeed, within a few years after the termination of the political career of Bismarck in 1890, his worst fear, "the nightmare of coalitions," became a very distinct possibility when Russia and France concluded a formal military alliance directed at Germany and Austria. The increasing estrangement of Britain and the Reich, which culminated in the fateful Anglo-French understanding of 1904, has already been noted above.

The sources of Anglo-German estrangement had become quite apparent years before the first World War. Naval rivalry plus Germany's astonishing industrial and commercial growth, which was viewed with increasing alarm in Great Britain, all tended to create a growing rift between the two nations. British publicists and historians, ever sensitive to the wishes of the Foreign Office, soon began to reflect this new state of affairs in their writings about Germany. What is more, this change in the British climate of opinion created a similar change in American opinion of Germany. Even at the turn of the century it was already evident that a good deal of anti-German sentiment was definitely setting in in the American press. One very important but little known reason which serves to explain this was the utter dependence of a large segment of the American press upon British sources for information about European and particularly German affairs. The Germanophobic Harmsworth press of Great Britain played an especially powerful role in this fascinating game of manipulating American opinion. The anti-German sentiments expressed in the widely read articles of F. W. Wile in *The New York Times* exemplified this British inspired transformation in American thinking in an especially effective way. [26](#)

## Entente propaganda

It is not to be denied, therefore, that even before 1914 the shifting sands of international diplomacy had undermined somewhat the proud edifice of Imperial German world prestige. But the Reich was not at all unusual in this respect and, in any case, no power could expect to remain perennially popular in an age of greedy colonial and imperial rivalry. It was not until after the outbreak of the holocaust of 1914 that the grotesque image of a rapacious and bloodthirsty Germany uniquely aggressive throughout history achieved widespread currency in the West. It required the deliberate and systematic diffusion of Allied wartime propagandist distortions to give birth to the pathological Germanophobia that later became such a familiar and integral part of Western thought processes. As Harry Paxton Howard recently expressed it:

Actually, in the literal sense of the word, the biggest job of revising history was done during the first World War when our "histories" were completely revised to show that Germany had always been our enemy, that Germany had started the war in 1914, that Germany had even started the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, and that in the Revolutionary War we had not been fighting the British but the Hessians -- not to mention such things as the Germans cutting the hands off Belgian babies, instead of the Belgians cutting off the hands of Congolese. This was a real revision of our histories which has distorted the American mind for more than forty years. [27](#)



Soon after 1914 many of the seductive stratagems later employed with such telling effect by World War II propagandists made their appearance. Distorted intellectual history, for example, proved to be a veritable gold mine for Entente propagandists. Selected passages quoted out of context from the writings of all sorts of Germans, however obscure intellectually or remote historically, were offered in support of the thesis of a singularly iniquitous German national character. Indeed, an American historian by no means inclined to pro-Germanism has, in describing the fondness of Western writers for seeking out alleged proto-Nazi elements in German writers all the way back to Martin Luther, pointed out that:

These are not new theories. It was a favorite technique of French propaganda in World War I to quote the words of German writers as proof of the unique character of German nationalism and ruthlessness. Nietzsche and Schopenhauer were quoted more often than Bismarck, and Heinrich Treitschke, more often than Kaiser William II. [28](#)

Allied propagandists had a field day after 1914 with the theory that German thinking was dominated by "prophets of war" like Bernhardt and Nietzsche. Even before the war books like Austin Harrison's *Pan-Germanic Doctrine*, [29](#) loaded though it was with factual errors and a tendentious thesis, were directly productive of considerable anxiety and hostility on the part of Britons toward Germany. Before long these British apprehensions were transferred to America, for even before the war "echoes of these alarms were heard through American magazines." [30](#) Perhaps the first American historian to give book length treatment of these puerilities was Roland G. Usher [31](#) who painted Germany in very sinister colors indeed. For him fanatic German nationalists conspiring to conquer additional European and overseas territories were the determining factor in German Imperial policy.

These fictions have all been exploded in the intervening years. To begin with, Nietzsche and Bernhardt were never "household names" in Germany, as Allied propagandists were fond of insisting. Bernhardt, indeed, got "a far wider hearing in England than in Germany when his book was translated as *Germany and the Next War*." [32](#) Nor did Bernhardt have any influence on the determination of German policies for, as the investigations of an American scholar have revealed, no one in the Foreign Office in 1914 had even read his works. [33](#) Even had Nietzsche been so popular in Germany as was believed outside that country, it is a mistake to identify him as a "militarist" and protagonist of the "war cult." As a matter of fact, the piously Protestant Prussian military leaders and bureaucracy despised this bitterly anti-Christian philosopher while he responded to them in kind. The Pan-Germans, it subsequently developed, had never had anything like the influence upon German policy planning once attributed to them by such alarmist writers as Roland Usher, Austin Harrison, and Andre Chéradame. So far as the outcome of the crisis of 1914 was concerned, they counted for absolutely nothing. [34](#)

After 1914, unfortunately, Americans proved all too susceptible to the blandishments of Entente propaganda. Though Woodrow Wilson might render lip service to the ideal of neutrality "in fact as well as in name during these days that try men's souls," neither he nor America's opinion-making organs remained faithful very long to this principle. The ties that bound many Americans to Britain in 1914 were varied. Among other things were common legal institutions and a common language to say nothing of numerous mutually profitable business relationships. But most potent of all were those ties of a primarily emotional and sentimental nature which bound many Americans to British ways of thought and to British literary and intellectual currents. In the words of Charles Callan Tansill:

Shakespeare, Milton, Scott, Dickens, Burns, Wordsworth, and a host of other British men of letters had knocked on the door of the American heart and had received a warm welcome. There never had been an American tariff on British intellectual goods nor any embargoes on British ideals. In the American mind in 1914 there was a deep substratum of British thought and it was easy to convince the average American that Britain's war was "our war." [35](#)

In the circumstances, it is not difficult to understand why Americans were so easily sold on the theory that Germany alone had provoked the war, that the Reich was uniquely "guilty." In this connection, the invasion of "little Belgium" was widely advertised as a particularly reprehensible though typical manifestation of a brutal and ruthless German policy. On the other hand, the entry of Britain into the war for the ostensible purpose of defending Belgian territorial integrity received almost universal acclaim. The posture of a crusading knight on a white steed charging to the defense of the outraged little country was, despite its essential falsity, assumed with relish and exploited with consummate skill by pro-British propagandists.

The shabby dishonesty of this posture becomes evident when we realize that during a Franco-German crisis in 1887, at a time when Anglo-German relations were most cordial, the British press had openly and unashamedly discussed the advisability of giving the green light to the German army to cross Belgium for the purpose of initiating military operations against France. [36](#) Finally, the British minister, Lord Vivian, informed the distraught Belgian government that Belgium would have to prepare to act alone in such a contingency. As Professor Langer aptly remarks, "considering all this, it is hardly possible to take the denials of the British government during the World War very seriously." [37](#)

As a further commentary on alleged Allied "idealism" in this matter we may cite the facts, since uncovered, that the Anglo-French war plans of 1911, 1912, and 1913 themselves contemplated the violation of Belgian territorial integrity in certain circumstances that might arise during a war with Germany! To make matters still worse, the British foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, even refused to promise British neutrality during the Franco-German war in return for a German counter promise to respect Belgian territory! The simple truth is that, as Grey later admitted, Britain was so committed to the support of France by secret agreements that, with or without the invasion of Belgium, she would have entered the war. Otherwise he would have felt compelled to resign. Indeed, it is evident from John Morley's famous Memorandum On Resignation as well as from the personal assurance of John Burns to Professor Barnes that the actual decision of the British Cabinet to go to war was made before the matter of Belgian was even mentioned! [38](#)

## Lusitania incident

The sinking of the British liner Lusitania in 1915 provoked a wild outburst against "Hun barbarism." Cleverly garbled accounts of the sinking confirmed many Americans in their belief in an innate German contempt for the most elementary principles of decency and humanity. Little heed was paid to the German charges that the vessel was armed and carried a cargo of munitions. Though the truth of the former allegation had never been definitely ascertained one way or another, the latter was unquestionably true. Important also was the fact that well in advance of the sinking, the German government had paid for prominent advertisements in the American press warning American passengers of the peril they faced while aboard British vessels in the war zone. These warnings were also repeated by the American Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan.

There are other perplexing facts about the Lusitania as well. For some reason a new captain, William Thomas Turner, was placed in charge for the return trip from New York. Turner flagrantly violated all the formal sailing orders given him in New York. Contrary to these instructions, he sought out rather than avoided the highly dangerous zone in which the vessel was actually sunk. Again, contrary to orders, he neither increased his speed nor followed a zigzag course when in the general zone of danger. Did captain Turner receive a subsequent set of instructions by wireless altering his original orders? Why was Turner met by Churchill upon his arrival at the pier after his rescue and taken directly to King George V and knighted? Was there a British governmental design to invite a submarine attack? [39](#)

Whatever the answer to these questions, one thing is certain: even if such a ship were unarmed, the German submarine commander had no way of knowing this and had an obligation to his men to be wary of merchantmen which, in fact, often were armed and travelling under instruction not to surrender "tamely." [40](#) Perhaps the most trenchant indictment of our myopic attitude towards the German use of the submarine comes from the pen of an American student of the subject:

This campaign was the German reply to the British blockade. In so far as America acquiesced in the blockade, she made the submarine campaign inevitable. Since it was treated as a fact in itself, without reference to its genesis, the American Government took up a rigid position of disapproval of the campaign. The American attitude toward the end product of a British policy led us to war with Germany. [41](#)

When the American government further insisted, contrary to all reason, upon defending the immunity from attack of even armed British merchantmen and American citizens aboard them, the felony was compounded. [42](#) When Britain followed a policy of waging unrestricted submarine warfare in the Baltic, where the German navy ruled the surface of the sea, sinking unarmed Swedish, Norwegian, and German merchantmen at the cost of numerous neutral lives, the Wilsonian homilies on international morality which were tendered with such regularity to Germany were not at all forthcoming.

As a final commentary on our attitude toward the use of the submarine by Germany in 1915 it should be noted that during World War II we adopted essentially the same view held earlier by the Germans when it was a question of one of our own undersea vessels surfacing politely to inform a potentially dangerous merchantman of intent to attack! [43](#)

## Atrocities propaganda

It has often been remarked that "in wartime truth is the first casualty." The 1914 conflict was no exception to this maxim. Atrocities propaganda in the hands of clever and unconscionable men became an exact science. All the belligerents endeavored to make the best use of this potent weapon. It must be admitted, however, that the efforts of the Central Powers in this direction were fumbling and ineffectual. The Allies, and particularly Great Britain, by contrast, proved themselves most capable of adroitly manipulating world opinion by widespread diffusion of fantastic tales of German villainy. Britain, of course, had the additional technical advantage of control of the cables and hence could rigidly censor all news coming to America. As C. Hartley Grattan expressed it, "honest, unbiased news simply disappeared out of the American papers along about the middle of August, 1914." [44](#)

Incredible tales of German barbarism in Belgium and France gave rise to a myth of unique German savagery that continues to color the thinking of many persons to this day. German soldiers, the world was gravely informed, amused themselves by cutting off the hands of Belgian babies. Another oft-repeated tale related how German soldiers amputated the breasts of Belgian women out of sheer viciousness. A slightly different variation of this story asserted that the amputation had been carried out by syphilitic Germans who, having ravished the women, wished to warn their countrymen thereby. There were persistent rumors about the crucifixion of Canadian soldiers. Perhaps the most repulsive and widely circulated of these fabrications was that concerning a German corpse factory where the bodies of both Allied and German soldiers killed in battle were allegedly melted down for fats and other products useful to the German war effort. The fact that Arthur Ponsonby utterly demolished the canard [45](#) did not prevent the Soviets from charging again at Nuremberg that during World War II a "Danzig firm ... constructed an electrically heated tank for making soap out of human fat." [46](#)

Atrocity propaganda was immeasurably effective in the United States during the first World War. When in the American papers of May 11-12, 1915, which was during the very week following the torpedoing of the Lusitania, there appeared the notorious Bryce Report on alleged German atrocities, American indignation at Germany reached a blind and febrile peak. The membership of the Bryce Committee, appointed by Parliament to investigate reports of alleged German atrocities, comprised some of the most distinguished jurists and historians in great Britain. To Americans it seemed that the chairman, Viscount Bryce, was one Briton who would never offer himself as the tool of tendentious propaganda. Bryce was a scholar of profound erudition and was considered by many to be the ablest foreign student of American government and institutions.

The "proofs" advanced by the Bryce Committee in support of the wildest tales of German fiendishness, as well as the methods employed in gathering them, violated every elementary rule of evidence. Careful non-German scholars, above all Arthur Ponsonby, have long since demonstrated the entire project to have been a tissue of distortions and outright falsehoods. [47](#) Evidently, Bryce and his esteemed colleagues had few qualms about perverting the truth if it redounded to the benefit of what they termed the "high cause" of Mother England. In later years other scholars in both Britain and America would display a similar willingness to prostitute talent and reputation in the interest of writing vicious propaganda.

The grave consequences of all this lurid atrocity propaganda can hardly be exaggerated. Indeed, "propaganda" of atrocities ... might be said to have contributed more than any other single factor to the making of a severe peace." [48](#) The extreme severity of that peace, it should be pointed out, provided certain assurance of the rise of Hitler or someone like him who would beguile the long-suffering and much-maligned German people with promises to snap the chains of slavery forged by the untried and unpunished "war criminals" of Versailles.

## American scholars and 'war guilt'

In the period between the outbreak of the war in 1914 and American entry in 1917 the Allied cause found many ardent champions in the ranks of American academic scholars who fired the first salvos of artillery in the mounting American offensive against Germany. The Anglophile American historian, Bernadotte E. Schmitt [49](#) painted a picture of nearly two centuries of Anglo-German relations out of which, in the end, Germany emerged a very poor second. To Schmitt the war was the end result of a German design to destroy the balance of power in Europe. No less influential was Thorstein Veblen's tendentious contribution *Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution* [50](#) wherein Germany was depicted as incurably militaristic and Britain, on the contrary, as anti-militaristic to the point of virtual sanctity.

It should occasion no surprise then, in the circumstances, that once we had entered the war all the stops were pulled in the propaganda campaign against Germany. Academic historians like Professors William Roscoe Thayer, Charles Downer Hazen, Munroe Smith, and Albert Bushnell Hart hastened to invest the crude, popular Germanophobic propaganda with an aura of "scholarly" respectability, while the celebrated Committee on Public Information, popularly called the Creel Press Bureau, in a series of highly successful raids on the nation's campuses, enlisted the aid of a still greater list of American historians. The result: a crude but most effective fusillade of wildly Germanophobic pamphlets and brochures with suggestive titles like *Conquest and Kultur*, *The German War Code*, and *The German Treatment of Conquered Territory*. Many of these publications reached circulation marks of a million or more. [51](#)

From the German viewpoint, the most damaging wartime propaganda volume was that of Henry Morgenthau [52](#) wherein it was alleged that the Kaiser, in company with the top bankers, diplomats, military leaders, and industrialists of Germany, decided on war at a secret Crown conference held at Potsdam on July 5, 1914. That Morgenthau was American Ambassador to Turkey and so presumably well informed seemed to lend credence to his charges which, he asserted, were based on revelations privately given him by Baron Wangenheim, the German Ambassador to Turkey. Scholars, including Fay and Barnes, whose works have already been cited, have, on the basis of contemporary documents, exposed the fictitious nature of the Morgenthau "revelations." The Crown Conference never took place for the very good reason that the persons alleged to have been present proved to have been elsewhere on that date. Yet Mr. Lansing's Commission of the Peace Conference cited the



Crown Conference Legend as justification for Article 231 of the Treaty, the notorious German "war guilt clause." [53](#)

The Germanophobes of 1914-18 labored more effectively than even they realized themselves, for despite the brilliant work of a generation of "revisionist" scholars who blasted the entire Entente apologetical structure, they left a permanent residue of Germanophobia deep in Western minds. After 1933 this residue of hatred would be cleverly exploited by unscrupulous writers who would make of it the formulation for an even more widely distorted caricature of Germany, what became, indeed, a Germanophobic myth.

## Germanophobia and Hitlerism

The influence of the Hitler regime on Western students of German history has been well described by Theodore Hamerow:

The new school ... assumed that National Socialism was more than a malignant manifestation of spiritual exhaustion and anarchy which had come in the wake of a ruinous war and an even more ruinous economic collapse. According to its view, the origins of the totalitarian ideology are deeply rooted in German life. They go back to the blood and iron of Bismarck, the paternalistic state of Frederick the Great, the political conservatism of Luther, and the resistance of the Teutonic tribalism to the conquering, civilizing, and Christianizing influence of the Romans. All German history is in a sense a gigantic factory manufacturing barbed wire for Buchenwald and Dachau ... Germany is the product of an unwholesome historical environment, it is the juvenile delinquent of European society. Once we recognize that the German mentality is different in kind from the mentality of the other nations of the West, we have the key to German history. [54](#)

Nazi racial policy and the assault upon the parties of the German Left provoked bitter reaction in America especially. "When liberals or socialists ... were silenced or forced to flee, their cause was quickly taken up by a very literate and vocal unit of the American public. But even more effective in some ways was the espousal of anti-Nazism by various communist front organizations ... [55](#) Perhaps most important and widely circulated of the volumes on Nazi Germany emanating from the American Left were Frederick L. Schuman's *The Nazi Dictatorship* [56](#) and Robert A. Brady's *The Spirit and Structure of German Fascism*. [57](#)

Thus after 1933 there was again a resurgence of Germanophobic literature reminiscent of -- indeed, worse than -- that of 1914-1918. That this latest batch of propaganda nonsense was at odds with the more dispassionate conclusions of revisionist scholarship of the immediately preceding years meant nothing to its originators. The calculated vilification of Germany proceeded apace.

Even a distinguished Australian professor in what was undoubtedly one of the relatively most impartial contemporary treatments of the Third Reich, was inspired to pen the following crude libel on the German people:

The Germans are a politically retarded race. They are still in the "myth" stage of development ... The Germans have never wanted democracy; they crave for authority, and respect the strong arm. They do not want individual freedom ... The average German would much rather salute a uniform than have a vote ... The German is designed by history and nature to provide mass material for dictatorship ...[58](#)

Anti-German (as distinct from anti-Nazi) feeling after 1933, and especially after the Nuremberg Racial Laws of 1935, encouraged an epidemic of crude potboilers which were given wide publicity by eagerly anti-German reviewers. The newspaper press, by and large, entered into the spirit of this campaign with a vigorous enthusiasm which left little room for complaint on the part of even the most pronounced critics of the Hitler regime. In the climate of opinion thus prepared, it was to be expected that the American mind in 1939 would be receptive to the Allied fiction of unique German responsibility for World War II.

## Propaganda and the 'war guilt' charge again

Undismayed by the fact that revisionist scholarship had made a shambles of the same charge as applied to 1914 -- "this time it is different," some were heard to say -- American publicists and scholars for the second time in a generation hastened to join the propaganda drive against this latest manifestation of alleged German perfidy. According to their interpretation, usually delivered in feigned accents of aggrieved piety, the war was simply and purely a struggle between the forces of sweetness and light (Britain and France, of course) on the one hand and an evil, foul-smelling aggressor (Germany, obviously) on the other.

Never before in the history of the nation did America's leadership and opinion-making organs espouse the cause of a foreign belligerent with such unrestrained enthusiasm as they did that of Germany's enemies during World War II. From the outset, the American government, press, and radio

openly and blatantly manifested a degree of dedication to the cause of Britain and France that made a hideous mockery of our official posture of neutrality. It has been said that "in wartime truth is the first casualty." The role of America's war-minded political leadership and camp-following press in the thirties and forties bears eloquent witness to the verity of this assertion. Recent research has served only to confirm the charge that "we were lied into the war."

Many of the circumstances of World War II seem to have been only a repetition of those of 1914. Again the story was circulated that only Germany was "prepared," that France and Britain had innocently or foolishly "slept" while the Axis powers had been feverishly building up their armies. Winston Churchill contributed much to this legend with his frequent allusions to "unarmed Britain." But, in truth, as Mr. Churchill's biographer, Emrys Hughes, had pointed out,<sup>59</sup> Britain was hardly the "dove of peace among birds of prey." Two years before the outbreak of war Churchill could boast that "money for defense is certainly pouring out in all directions in Britain." Mr. Hughes aptly comments that Britain "... had plunged into the arms race like the Continental nations."<sup>60</sup>

The thesis of an "overwhelming" German armed superiority in 1939 is entirely without foundation in fact, as is evident from the official report to the Secretary of the Army of the United States submitted in 1947, which Mr. Hughes discusses at some length.

Perhaps the definitive repudiation of the myth that Germany was plotting global conquest in 1939 (apart from the lack of documentary evidence in support of that melodramatic conviction) is to be found in the amazing fact that Germany was, in reality, ill-prepared both militarily and economically when the war came. The most complete study of this important subject is that of an American economist, Burton H. Klein,<sup>61</sup> who, pointing out that in Germany "there was no real mobilization of manpower prior to the outbreak of war," continues to say: "Thus, whether we examine the general nature of German economic recovery, or the raw material self-sufficiency program, or the mobilization of manpower, the same general conclusion is evident: The scale of Germany's economic mobilization for war was quite modest."<sup>62</sup> As A. J. P. Taylor recently expressed it: "Even in 1939 the German army was not equipped for a prolonged war; and in 1940 the German land forces were inferior to the French in everything except leadership."<sup>63</sup> The case has been concisely summarized by two American historians quite warm in their enthusiasm for the Allied cause in general and the foreign policy of Franklin Roosevelt in particular: "In a word, the Germans were equipped for a two-month Blitzkrieg, such as they waged in Poland. They were by no means ready for the type of war in which they became involved."<sup>64</sup>

Unfortunately for the schemes of the interventionists at the time, not all Americans were sold on the pristine unalloyed purity of the Allied cause or on the fable of a German threat to our national security. This necessitated a high pressure propaganda campaign, hitherto without parallel in American history. Before the war was barely ten months old, facile propagandists had utilized Germany's stunning military successes in Poland, Norway, Denmark, the Low countries, and France as the basis for shrewdly contrived charts purporting to reveal a nefarious German plot "to conquer the world." Germany's "blueprint for aggression" or "timetable for conquest," as it was variously labeled, was deliberately calculated, when coordinated with the most wildly fanciful tales of an omnipresent German "fifth column," to curdle the blood of unsuspecting Americans. William Henry Chamberlain's comments on this propaganda merit quotation here:

"Hitler's Fifth Column" was a popular subject for sensational magazine articles. One might have imagined that the United States was flooded with Axis agents, carrying on a active propaganda ... for influencing American public opinion. But on sober analysis this "fifth column" evaporates into the mist of overheated fantasy. No doubt there were German, Japanese, and Italian agents in this country. But they were not getting a hearing on lecture platforms or publishing articles in influential magazines.<sup>65</sup>

The definitive repudiation of the "fifth column" fraud comes from the pen of a non-revisionist Dutch historian who admits that he too "was a victim of the fifth column panic" at one time.<sup>66</sup>

With the passage of time even the President himself did not shrink from the unsavory tasks of contributing personally to this palpably dishonest propaganda of fear. With his tongue in his cheek, he told the American people on October 27, 1941, that he had come by a secret German map revealing a Nazi design to conquer South America. Moreover, he had another Nazi document disclosing Hitler's intention "to abolish all existing religions."<sup>67</sup> Needless to say, these documents were not produced then for anyone else's examination, nor have they been produced in the intervening years, and with very good reason. They never really existed to begin with! Had such documents really existed, they would have proved incomparable grist for the prosecution's mill at Nuremberg.

The conventional interpretations given by Allied propagandists to explain the diplomatic origins of the war in 1939 as well as the background to American entry therein are as unlike the truth as it is humanly possible to imagine. When compared with the most recent revisionist research into these subjects, they read like something straight from the pages of Alice-In-Wonderland or a Grimm fairy tale.

Unfortunately, historians in both Britain and America, except for the revisionists, have operated on the assumption that "the question of war responsibility in relation to 1939 and 1941 is ... completely

and forever settled. It is widely held that there can be no controversy this time." <sup>68</sup> Yet even a casual exposure to the more significant revisionist literature dealing with that topic – a literature which had developed despite a willful campaign of suppression on the part of most historians, reviewers, and publishing houses – should occasion some doubts in the bosom of even the most ardent court historian. <sup>69</sup> But the truth is that here have been very few signs of vigorous life in the corpus of scholarly integrity in the aftermath of World War II. All moves of a peaceful nature by Axis leaders before or during the war are ignored or misrepresented while the bellicose policies of Roosevelt, Churchill, Halifax, Kennard and other are clothed in the deceptive garb of sweet reasonableness.

Perhaps the most striking and certainly the most unexpected repudiation of the myth of "sole German guilt" for the 1939 war has come recently from the pen of an English historian hitherto almost notorious in his hostility to Germany, Dr. A.J.P. Taylor. <sup>70</sup> British historians and publicists desirous of perpetuating the historical blackout in that country were thrown into an unreasoning panic by the appearance of Professor Taylor's volume, for, quite apart from the intrinsic merits of his arguments, Taylor, with his reputation for Germanophobia, is the one scholar from whose pen such a volume would have seemed least likely to come. His wartime treatise, *The Course of German History*, was one of the most virulent attacks ever penned on Germany by a professional historian anywhere. Nonetheless there is scarcely an article in the sacred creed of Allied wartime propaganda which he leaves unchallenged in his *The Origin of the Second World War*.

Taking every issue and crisis of major import which divided Germany and the West before the war, Taylor makes it clear that Hitler was a shrewd statesman who never wanted war and certainly not the global holocaust which actually came in 1939. Far from being the culmination of a sinister "German plot" to conquer the world, World War II was, on the German side, a struggle to "reverse the verdict of the first [World War] and to destroy the settlement which followed it." <sup>71</sup> At worst, Taylor feels, the war was the unfortunate product of inept diplomacy a terrible tragedy of errors. In his own words: "In retrospect, though many were guilty, none was innocent ... This is a story without heroes; and perhaps even without villains ... The war of 1939 far from being welcome, was less wanted by nearly everybody than almost any war in history." <sup>72</sup>

## **The vilification of Germany, 1941-45**

If pro-Allied propaganda had earlier conditioned American thinking so as to smooth the path for eventual American intervention against Germany, that same propaganda after our entry in late 1941 was admirably calculated to persuade Americans of the inspired wisdom of a war and postwar policy of vindictive, grinding harshness toward the Reich.

In Britain, as in the United States, Germanophobia reached feverish proportions. One of the best known and most extreme of the Germanophobic writers in Britain during the period was the late Lord Vansittart. Having held highly important and responsible posts in the British diplomatic service, he was assured of a large and sympathetic audience. In a series of radio broadcasts and in a pamphlet with the suggestive title *Black Record* he cast Germany in the role of a shrike or "butcher bird" nation which had continually preyed on its weaker and more virtuous neighbors throughout the ages.

Another British writer, E. O. Lorimer, in a volume entitled *What the German Needs* <sup>73</sup> presented the following "diagnosis" of the Germans:

It is now widely accepted amongst those who have given thought to the problem of Germany ... that the world has not a normal, rational people to deal with, but a nation suffering from an acute attack of homicidal mania, rendered more dangerous by a background of specious philosophy and more horrible by a lust for inhuman, calculated cruelty; a nation moreover subject to the recurrence of similar attacks, of which this last is only the most severe ...

Lorimer's solution to the "problem" of Germany included, among other things, a drastic reduction in the size of Prussia, the removal of every German from Danzig and East Prussia (remarkably like what actually happened in 1945), and the use of captured German troops as "labor gangs under Allied discipline and supervision, to build and clear, to dig and drain." <sup>74</sup>

In America an even more melodramatic and comic-book type interpretation of German history came from the pen of Paul Winkler with his *The Thousand Year Conspiracy: Secret Germany Behind the Mask*. <sup>75</sup> According to Winkler, Hitler and Nazism were but the current manifestations of a millennium-long "conspiracy" against all human civilization hatched centuries ago by sinister "Prusso-Teutonic" forces within Germany.

Another writer in this country, Theodore N. Kaufman, in a book which in retrospect amazes one in that it could even find a self-respecting publisher, <sup>76</sup> insisted the Nazis "were merely the mirrors reflecting centuries-old inbred lust of the German nation for conquest and mass murder." It was the "German people" who were "responsible" for the war and hence "must be made to pay." To rid the world of these "war-lusted souls," Kaufman advocated the "eugenic sterilization" of 48,000,000 Germans. Males over sixty and women over forty-five could be exempted. By such a policy he estimated that "Germanism" could be extinguished in two generations. Meanwhile, German war

prisoners could, after sterilization, be placed in "labor battalions" for the rebuilding of ruined cities while the Reich itself could be partitioned among its deserving neighbors. Even the inspired savagery of Joseph Stalin, in whose criminally fertile mind originated what later was called the "Morgenthau Plan," seems tame in comparison with the spirit of the "Kaufman Plan." Yet the self-constituted custodians of international morality at Nuremberg with their boundless capacity for "selective indignation," to use Sir Arnold Lunn's pithy phrase, could find no words of reproof for such genocidal schemes directed at the German people!

One might dismiss writers like Winkler and Kaufman as lunatic fringe fanatics, and even Vansittart was, after all, a politician and hence might be expected to indulge in some strong propagandizing. But it is difficult to understand why talented scholars, without solicitation, rushed into print with the most specious Germanophobic works. For example, the above-mentioned British historian A. J. P. Taylor in a facile book, *The Course of German History*, [77](#) undeniably characterized by a sparkling literary style, wrote that:

Germany is not a typical European nation, nor even a typical Great Power; shaped by history, it has acquired a unique character and played a unique role, a role almost entirely aggressive and destructive, an alien body in the structure of European civilization. [78](#)

No doubt many uninformed non-Germans were impressed by such irresponsible statements at the time. Viewed, however, in the light of the last decade and a half, during which time Berlin had become a glowing symbol of Western opposition to Red totalitarianism, there is something contemptibly mean and petty about them.

The French historian, Edmond Vermeil, in a work of considerable popularity [79](#) expressed much concern about an alleged German offensive against Europe and "Western humanism" throughout history. Vermeil, incidentally, became one of the leading spokesmen of a school of writers fond of tracing the roots of Nazism back to a supposedly pathological German intellectual and cultural tradition.

Another example of this type of perverted intellectual history concealed behind impressive trappings of scholarship was William Montgomery McGovern's >From Luther to Hitler. [80](#) In Germany, McGovern explained, there was a deeply rooted feeling that "liberal institutions were essentially pernicious." This feeling was traceable to a "Fascist-Nazi" political tradition that had long been developing in Germany. Thus Luther was an "early precursor" of Hitler as were Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and a long litany of other Germans too numerous to mention.

The prostitution of the intellect for propaganda purposes assumed still other forms. An entire school of Sunday supplement writers sought to explain a mythical "German problem" in terms of the jargon of psychiatry. Germany, according to this interpretation, was very definitely the victim of an "abnormal national personality," possibly even schizophrenic. An American neuropsychiatrist, Richard Brickner, exploited this illicit technique of transferring without warrant psychiatric and medical concepts applicable only to individuals to the entire broad field of historical interpretation when he diagnosed Germany to be a "paranoid" nation with a "paranoid" history going back at least five generations. [81](#) Paranoia, it might be pointed out, is generally regarded as extremely difficult, if not impossible, to cure. Might it not be advisable then to destroy such a nation or to sterilize its population?

Another American psychiatrist [82](#) concluded that the Nazi regime was the historical upshot of "personality adjustments" deriving from German family relationships. Since the typical German father was a supposed tyrant, it was easy for the Germans to submit meekly to the totalitarian tyranny of Hitler who was the symbolical embodiment of paternal authority. [83](#)

## Unconditional hatred

During World War II this stream of Germanophobic literature reached flood tide proportions. The situation in the cinema and radio was, if anything, worse. The "hate Germany" motive seemed uppermost even in our top level strategic planning. Indeed, our entire wartime policy can very well be summed up as one of "Unconditional Hatred," to borrow Russell Grenfell's apt term. This driving, irrational impulse seemed to operate without reference to, and even to the exclusion of, all other goals. No thought was given to the power balance situation of tomorrow or the day after, to the insane folly of substituting the inherently far more menacing power of the U.S.S.R. for that of Germany, Italy and Japan in Europe and the Far East. One might have imagined that the alliances and enmities of the period had been given eternal certification in Heaven. [84](#)

Had there been even a modicum of rational planning from the standpoint of enlightened self-interest, we would not, we could not, have made "Unconditional Surrender" and the diabolical "Morgenthau Plan" the bases of our policy. Had we not permitted reason and good sense to be consumed in the fires of vindictive passion, we would never have assented to the fateful innovation of constituting ourselves at once as judge, jury, prosecutor, and hangman of defeated military and political leaders at Nuremberg. Had we not permitted ourselves to be moved by the base spirit of hypocrisy, our much

vaunted sense of humanitarian values and moral indignation would never have permitted us to wink at and even encourage the "Crimes Against Humanity" perpetrated by the Poles, Czechs, and Russians against 14,000,000 Eastern Germans in 1945-1946. [85](#)

## Post-World War II Germanophobia

After World War II there was a marked lessening of interest in Germany with the consequence that there was a considerable decline in the current production of literature concerned with that country. Be that as it may, however, books and articles about Germany are still fairly plentiful. Hence the question arises: Has there been any significant development of a corrective literature to counter the tendentious interpretations of previous years? To the shame of honest historiography, the answer must be a very decided negative. There is a continuing "historical blackout," to borrow Harry Elmer Barnes' phrase, where Germany is concerned. The older historians, of the most part, manifest a stubborn reluctance to surrender their fixed delusions. The younger ones have been so indoctrinated during their entire education careers that they seem completely unaware of the challenge thus presented to their scholarship. The sole exception to this is a veritable handful of revisionist historians. Thus far, however, their efforts have been mainly limited, by and large, to tracing the origins of World War II and the genesis of Pearl Harbor. Little attention of a revisionist nature has been accorded to German history as such by non-German scholars.

Typical of postwar attempts by Western historians to perpetuate the Germanophobic myth was Hans Kohn's article "Rethinking Recent German History." [86](#) Kohn resuscitated all the stock villains of German history who had long been so dear to the hearts of melodramatic anti-German writers: Bismarck as the supposed embodiment of Machiavellian power politics; the wicked Prussian and German ruling classes; that nebulous demon, German intellectual development and all the rest of the tiresome litany. He even attacked those who "attempt to show that the pernicious trends in modern German history were common to European civilization as a whole." For example, he cites the charge that Gobineau's racism influenced Wagner, though it is an undeniable fact. He writes:

But isolated trends in Western nations become dominant ideas in Germany. Kings, diplomats, and demagogues, who succumbed to the demoniac lure of power, existed elsewhere; but the inclination of the majority of the German people and of German intellectuals to accept them uncritically is the troubling problem.

Further on he relates that the Nazi "deviation from the main lines of European development ... started long before Hitler." He quotes with obvious approval the hackneyed view that "National Socialism was made possible by the separating of German political thought from Western European thought ..." This supposed separation he traces back to Fichte and Hegel. Perhaps it should not surprise us that even the present urgent state of world affairs had had little influence upon Mr. Kohn's tendentious views of German history. He still seems to feel we can afford the luxury of baiting Germany, as is evident from some of his recent articles in which he delivers his accustomed wearying preachments to the Germans on the alleged pernicious influences in their history. [87](#)

A widely read college level text by Louis L. Snyder, gathers between its covers all the threadbare clichés and superstitions ever penned by Germanophobic writers. [88](#) Snyder is virtually obsessed with his favorite delusions of intellectual history. To read his account, one might imagine that pre-Hitlerite Germany had some sort of monopoly on "irrationalism," "racism," and "anti-Semitism."

The following quotation is a fair sample of Mr. Snyder's "scholarship":

Nazi extremism was not a bolt out of the heavens, nor did it occur in a vacuum. Behind it was a long tradition; its roots lay deep in history. It was the result of a national tradition of discipline and obedience, ground into the Germans by a combination of Hegelian worship of the State, Prussian intransigence, militarism, nationalism, romanticism, and historicism ... Germany has remained an obstreperous, unhappy stepchild among nations. Responsible for this phenomenon is a combination of peculiar historical and psychological factors ... Politically immature and beset by a sense of insecurity, the Germans overcompensated by turning to any father-image who seemed to satisfy their needs – "der Alte Fritz" to William of the iron fist to the hypomaniac Hitler. [89](#)

Writing a full twelve years after the war's end, Hilda Graef went all the way back to the writings of Meister Eckhart, a fourteenth century German mystic, for an "already quite plain" manifestation of the "sinister streak" she professed to find in the "German makeup." [90](#) Like many before her, Miss Graef sought to drag psychiatry in by the heels when she offered the opinion that Germany is a "schizophrenic nation." [91](#)

It seems incredible that years after the end of World War II sensational treatments of the Winkler-Kaufman-Brickner variety should continue to appear in print. Yet such has been the case. T. H. Tetens in a fantastic volume [92](#) which, if believed, would drive an impassable wedge between Germany and the rest of the West to the advantage of the Soviets, gives a feverish account of an alleged diabolical scheme by German "geopolitical master minds" operating out of Madrid (how fitting from a leftist



viewpoint) and Bonn to sell out the West to Moscow. The Tetens book reads like something straight from the pages of Alice in Wonderland or the Thousand and One Nights. [93](#)

An article by Alfred Werner [94](#) achieved a new dimension even for Germanophobic cant. Mr. Werner expressed concern lest recent expressions of "philo-Semitism" in Germany might enable the Germans to find a "catharsis" and thus too easily liquidate their "guilt." He tells his readers in reference to recent favorable German reactions to the play *The Diary of Anne Frank* that "it is one thing to find 'catharsis' in the theater, and quite a different thing to admit, 'Yes, I am guilty,' and to go on living with this feeling of guilt." Apparently no German must ever again lift his head in polite company. It is not at all surprising that Werner should accept the imbecilic notion of the "collective guilt" of the German people so popular with Karl Jaspers and some others. On the other hand, Germans were widely anathematized journalistically for the recent world wide rash of anti-Semitic outrages. It would truly seem as if the Germans are damned-if-they-do and damned-if-they-don't.

But undoubtedly the most widely publicized book dealing with Germany to appear in America since the end of World War II had been William L. Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. [95](#) For many months in succession the Shirer volume held first place in the nonfictional category of the best seller list. When one considers the sheer bulk of the volume and the turgid if ingratiating style in which it is written, this is a remarkable tribute to the manner in which skilled promoters can contrive popularity. But far more important, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, embodying as it does the very worst features of the Germanophobic propaganda of 1933-1945, contributes very little to an honest understanding of German history, its publicity buildup and the rave reviews to the contrary notwithstanding. Again and again the reader is sharply reminded of the author's bias against not merely the Nazis but the entire German people. For example, as early as page five he writes that "the German people" were "a natural instrument which he [Hitler, that is] was able to shape to his own sinister ends." And again we are told [96](#) that Bismarck, Kaiser Wilhelm II, and Hitler left a common stamp upon the German people in the form of a "lust for power and domination, a passion for unbridled militarism, a contempt for democracy and individual freedom and a longing for authority, for authoritarianism." And once more in thundering tones of pontifical certitude it is asserted that "Nazism and the Third Reich ... were but a logical continuation of German history." [97](#)

Shirer gives scarcely a hint as to the real reason for the advent of Nazism: the fact that Germany was saddled with a Draconian peace, the terms of which were mitigated through the years but slightly and then haltingly and with ill grace. His account of the coming of World War II simply takes no account of the findings of recent revisionist scholarship, as is perhaps to be expected, while his repeated sneers directed at the members of the anti-Nazi resistance within Germany only betray still further his basic and deep-seated antipathy to everybody and everything German. The appearance of such a work at this time when German and Western amity was never more urgently needed is distinctly to be regretted.

Even more regrettable, however, has been the emergence, in large part during the months following the seizure of Adolf Eichmann, of a body of horror literature alleging brutal German wartime crimes, mainly against the Jews of Europe, of such depravity and magnitude that readers might thereby be tempted to speculate that, whatever Allied statesmen did to provoke conflict with the Axis powers, they were entirely justified in taking such action. [98](#) Should even the worst of these questionable charges against Germany be one day verified by some tribunal concerning whose impartiality there is agreement on all sides, it would still be necessary to remember that they were made possible by the war itself. Equally as important, they would have to be balanced off against the crimes perpetrated against the Germans by the Allies. Hitherto it had been customary only to cite those crimes attributed to Germany.

### **Allied 'war crimes'**

Certainly, the expulsion in 1945 of 14,000,000 Eastern Germans from their ancestral homeland by the Czechs, Poles, and Soviets with the tacit connivance of the Western Allies was a "war crime" by any standard. Moreover it took on distinctly macabre overtones when the discrepancy between the number expelled and those who actually reached Germany reached a possible three million mark.

Surely, too, the as yet little known fact that not Hitler but the British, by their own admission, initiated unrestricted bombing of civilian areas ought to merit for them membership in the select society of "war criminals." The unbelieving reader need only consult the testimony of the British officials J. M. Spaight and Sir Arthur Harris, for incontrovertible proof of this charge. [99](#) A decision of the British Air Ministry made on May 11, 1940, to attack targets in Western Germany instituted the practice of bombing purely civilian objectives. This "epoch-making event," as F. J. P. Veale correctly describes it, marked an ominous departure from the rule that hostilities are to be limited to operations against enemy military forces alone. [100](#) Spaight, former Principal Secretary of the Air Ministry, makes the following amazing comment on the decision of May 11, 1940:

Because we were doubtful about the psychological effect of propagandist distortion of the truth that it was we who started the strategic bombing offensive, we have shrunk from giving our great decision of May 11, 1940, the publicity it deserves. That surely was a mistake. It was a splendid decision. [101](#)

But the "great decision," the "splendid decision" of May 11, 1940, which was ultimately to cost the lives of millions, including thousands of Mr. Spaight's own countrymen, was to have an even more grisly sequel, for, according to Sir Charles Snow who had charge of selecting scientific personnel for war research in Great Britain in World War II, F. A. Lindemann, a Cabinet member and confidant of Churchill, produced in early 1942 a remarkable Cabinet paper on the subject of the strategic bombing of Germany:

It described, in quantitative terms, the effect on Germany of a British bombing offensive in the next eighteen months (approximately March 1942-September 1943). The paper laid down a strategic policy. The bombing must be directed essentially against German working-class houses. Middle-class houses have too much space round them, and so are bound to waste bombs ...[102](#)

One wonders if it was the cultivated humanitarianism inherent in this decision to assure the death of more working class Germans per bomb which entitled the Allies, and in particular the British, to sit in moral judgment on German leaders at Nuremberg in 1946!

Can anyone doubt that the "Morgenthau Plan" which envisaged the destruction of the Ruhr mines, the pasteurization of a primarily industrial Germany, and the political dismemberment of Germany was a "war crime?" Had it been carried out rigorously, it would have been, as Freda Utley describe it, "the greatest act of genocide perpetrated in modern times ... At least thirty million people would have died of starvation." [103](#) Though, fortunately, this diabolical scheme was never carried out to the letter, its spirit so permeated the occupational planning for Germany under the early "levels of industry" plans that for a long time after the war had ended Germans were deliberately kept on a diet far below that enjoyed by the inmates of Auschwitz up to almost the end of the war.

Who can doubt the criminal quality of the Soviet butchery of thousands of Polish officer in the Katyn forest in 1940? Even the Nuremberg tribunal resisted (albeit by inaction) Soviet attempts to lay that one at the door of Germany. [104](#) Or perhaps the moral superiority of our "noble" Soviet allies, as we were fond of calling them, rested upon the manner in which they distinguished themselves in brutalizing the women of conquered lands. No doubt the enthusiastic response of the Soviet soldiery to the incitements of Ilya Ehrenburg to seize the women of Germany as the spoils of victory which resulted in the rape of half the women of Berlin alone lent substance to the pretensions of moral dignity assumed by the prosecuting powers at Nuremberg. [105](#)

## German 'guilt' in perspective

Any final summation or balance sheet of German war crimes honestly verified, it may then be assumed, will most assuredly be balanced out by the sordid record of Germany's hypocritically self-righteous enemies.

At the heart of the conviction that German World War II atrocities were quantitatively and qualitatively without parallel in the annals of human experience is the as yet unverified allegation that, in the pursuit of a macabre "Final Solution," 6,000,000 Jews were cold-bloodedly murdered in gas chambers and before Einsatzkommando firing squads. The "evidence" presented in support of this charge to date had not been more persuasive than that used to substantiate the gruesome stories of German atrocity horrors spelled out in the long since discredited Bryce Report of 1915.

Neither the proceedings at Nuremberg in 1946 nor those associated with the recent trial of Adolf Eichmann were such as to inspire the confidence of the impartial investigator. Likewise the frenetic efforts of some academic scholars to prove the charge have fallen quite flat. [106](#) But even if one should assume the worst to be true and, from the welter of conflicting numerical estimates as to the number of Jewish fatalities, accept the largest, 6,000,000, as undoubtedly correct, the number of victims of these German atrocities would still fall far short of the number of German, Japanese, and Italian non-combatants who perished at Allied hands as the result of mass population expulsions, saturation bombing of civilian centers, postwar deprivation, and Soviet massacres and political liquidations.

The simple fact then is that there is every reason to believe that a final accounting must exculpate Germany of any unique inhumanity in the waging of World War II, just as revisionist scholarship had exonerated her of sole or even primary guilt for the war itself.

Certainly there is not justification for those writers, and above all those academic "scholars," in the West who continue to parrot the crudities and distortions of yesteryear. There is a monotonous uniformity in all their interpretations, the fundamental error of which lies in the fact that they, in assessing the reasons for the demise of democracy and the rise of Nazi totalitarianism in Germany, ascribe primary or even sole causality to factors supposedly indigenous to German history and society. The alleged "weakness" or "ineptitude" of democratic Germans is a theme which runs like a red thread through most such treatments. Coupled with a sinister streak" which has purportedly manifested itself in a diseased intellectual and political development and an alleged obsession with militarism, this usually suffices to "explain" for us "the course of German history" with its "logical culmination" in National Socialism.

As might be expected, such critics scarcely comment on the Allied "statesmen" at Versailles, who, in direct violation of the pre-Armistice agreements, imposed a punitive peace on the Reich. Nor have they much to say of the intransigence of Western "democratic" politicians who refused to make the slightest concessions to Germany during the interwar years. Non-German "guilt," however much it might have contributed to the rise of Hitler, is never a popular subject with them.

Germany during the Weimar era produced in Gustav Stresemann and Heinrich Brüning two of the ablest statesmen of the present century. These men were thoroughly "democratic" to the core. 107

Had either of these men been offered a fraction of the concessions to which they were entitled, the Weimar Republic could have been saved and the world spared the insane bloodbath of 1939-45, as well as the consequent alteration of the world balance of power to the advantage of the U.S.S.R. This was the portentous, terrifying essence of the most genuinely crucial period in modern world history; what seems, indeed, to have marked the real beginning of the Decline of the West. It is a story in which the impartial historian can assign at most a very minor role to German villainy. If villains must be had, the historian must also look elsewhere: to Paris, to London, to Washington, and to Moscow, but only lastly to Berlin.

## Appendices

### Appendix I

The reader may best obtain an adequate insight into the real reason for the advent of World War II in the following: Harry Elmer Barnes:, *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, just cited, and his articles "The End of the Old America," *Modern Age*, Spring, 1958, "Revisionism and the Promotion of Peace," *Liberation*, Summer Issue, 1958, and "Revisionism Revisited," *Liberation*, Summer issue, 1959. See also Fritz Hesse, *Hitler and the English* (London: Allen Wingate, 1954); Emrys Hughes, *Winston Churchill: British Bulldog, His Career in War and Peace*, cited above; Charles Callan Tansill, *Backdoor to War*, cited above; and Luigi Villari *Italian Foreign Policy Under Mussolini* (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1956). My own article "Revisionism and Roosevelt's Foreign Policy," *American Mercury*, December, 1959, contains a brief summary of the pertinent facts.

The provocative pre-Pearl Harbor diplomacy which finally eventuated via the Pacific "backdoor" in the war so ardently sought by the Roosevelt Administration is competently chronicled by various writers including the contributors to Dr. Barnes' symposium *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace* and Professor Tansill's *Backdoor to War* just cited. Other worthwhile accounts which might profitably be consulted include Charles A. Beard, *American Foreign Policy in the Making, 1932-1940* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946) and, by the same author, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948); William Henry Chamberlain, *America's Second Crusade*, already cited; Richard N. Current, *Secretary Stimson: A Study in Statecraft* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1954); George Morgenstern, *Pearl Harbor: The Story of the Secret War* (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1947) and Rear Admiral Robert A. Theobald, *The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor* (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1954). The most complete listing of revisionist books dealing with all aspects of World War II is to be found in the indispensable *Select Bibliography of Revisionist Books* (Oxnard: Oxnard Press-Courier, 1958).

### Appendix II

The interested reader should gain an adequate insight into the true nature of the wartime diplomacy of the West in the following volumes which deal entirely or in part with the subject: Hanson Baldwin, *Great Mistakes of the War* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950); William Henry Chamberlin, *America's Second Crusade* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1950); George N. Crocker, *Roosevelt's Road to Russia* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1959); Richard N. Current, *Secretary Stimson: A Study in Statecraft* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1954); Richard F. Fenno, *The Yalta Conference* (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1955); John T. Flynn, *The Roosevelt Myth* (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1956); Rosalie M. Gordon, *How the Reds Won* (New Rochelle: America's Future Inc., 1959); William L. Neumann, *Making the Peace, 1941-1945* (Washington, D.C.: Foundation for Foreign Affairs, 1950); and Felix Wittmer, *The Yalta Betrayal* (Caldwell: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1954).

### Appendix III

The incredible story of the "Morgenthau Plan" is fully exposed by John T. Flynn in his latest edition of *The Roosevelt Myth*, already cited, as well as by George N. Crocker in his *Roosevelt's Road to Russia*, likewise already cited. Here one might also consult Eugene Davidson's *The Death and Life of Germany* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959) and John Snell's *Wartime Origins of the East-West Dilemma Over Germany* (New Orleans: The Hauser Press, 1959).

The facts about "Unconditional Surrender" are well brought out in various volumes including: Harry C. Butcher, *My Three Years With Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946); Allen W. Dulles, *Germany's Underground* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947); Mother Mary Alice Gallin, O.S.U.,

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## Notes

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